United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1249
16 October 1992

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ Security Council, concerned over information provided by Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, says it will hold those who hamper deployment of United Nations Operation responsible for aggravating "unprecedented humanitarian disaster".

+ Secretary-General to send mission to Solomon Islands following request by Government of that country to investigate incident on border with Papua New Guinea in which two citizens of Solomon Island were killed in mid-September.

+ United States calls on General Assembly to request that Board of Auditors further investigate serious abuses cited in its current report.

+ Egypt asks United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs to launch appeal for aid to earthquake victims through United Nations Disaster Relief Organization.

+ United Nations official says Secretary-General has spoken with UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, about reported election irregularities in Angola.

+ International Organization for Migration granted observer status by General Assembly.

+ Human Rights Committee to hold forty-sixth session at Geneva from Monday, 19 October, to 6 November.

* * *

The Security Council has expressed deep concern over information it received this evening at a briefing by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Mohamed Sahnoun, and in particular the difficulties he has faced in the distribution of humanitarian assistance.

According to a statement issued on behalf of the Council members by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimée of France, the rapid deployment of personnel of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) constituted a

(more)

For information media—not an official record

prerequisite. The Council considered that "those who would hamper the deployment of UNOSOM would be responsible for aggravating an already unprecedented humanitarian disaster".

The Council reiterated its full support for the action of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and expressed the wish that the recent appeal in Geneva for an increase in the humanitarian assistance to Somalia be heeded.

Speaking to correspondents after briefing the Council, Mr. Sahnoun explained that a large part of the humanitarian aid was reaching the people deep inside Somalia, especially through the airlifts, stressing that the problem was securing the ports.

Mr. Sahnoun emphasized that a strong message should be sent to the Somali faction chiefs who should be held responsible for any delay of humanitarian assistance and of deployment of the troops. "The Somalis must understand that they have to meet us halfway if they want humanitarian assistance to go to their people", he said.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has agreed to send a mission to the Solomon Islands following a request by the Government of that country, a United Nations official said today. The mission will be led by Mian Qadrud-Din, Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo.

The mission was requested in a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, dated 17 September, from the Chargé d'Affaires of the Solomon Islands, in connection with two incidents on its border with Papua New Guinea, in which two citizens of the Solomon Islands were killed. The exact date of the mission's arrival was currently under discussion with the Government of the Solomon Islands, the United Nations official said.

* * *

Larry Pressler, a member of the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called yesterday on the General Assembly to request that the Board of Auditors conduct an expanded audit of United Nations accounts for the biennium 1990-1991 to further investigate serious deficiencies and abuses identified in its current report. "Without improved performance and measurable progress towards accountability and efficiency, Congress will find it more and more difficult to fund United Nations programmes", Mr. Pressler said.

In his statement to the General Assembly's Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), which is currently debating the United Nations financial reports, Mr. Pressler said the expanded audit should explore the problems cited in such areas as programme management, use of staff resources, payment of staff allowances and benefits, and procurement and property management. The expanded audit should include a 100 per cent audit of

(more)

education grants, dependency allowance, housing subsidies and tax reimbursement payments, he said.

On the financial crisis of the United Nations, Louise Fréchette of Canada said non-payment by many Member States had placed an unjust burden on those that did meet their obligations. Unless those obligations were met, she said, "we cannot expect the Secretariat to be very effective in meeting the demands of Members if it has to live from hand to mouth".

Over the summer, she went on, a working group had examined the issue of providing incentives to Member States to pay. A number of interesting ideas had emerged, but in the end it came down to a question of will. It was shocking that only one third of United Nations Member States had paid their regular budget assessment and fewer still their regular and peace-keeping dues.

* * *

The Government of Egypt has asked the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to launch, through the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), an appeal for international assistance for the victims of the earthquake which hit Cairo on 12 October.

According to a press release issued yesterday, the United Nations Office in Geneva estimates that almost 500 people were killed and thousands injured in the earthquake. Tens of thousands of people were left homeless in several districts of Cairo when houses and buildings collapsed. The Egyptian Prime Minister indicated that the immediate priority was to provide emergency shelters to those whose houses had collapsed and underlined the urgent need for temporary shelters, tents and blankets.

DHA-UNDRO has made an emergency cash grant of $550,000 for local purchase of relief items and has sent two experts in search and rescue operations to Cairo. The Agencies are cooperating with the Italian Government in organizing emergency airlifts. Also, the United Nations Disaster Management Team, which is composed of representatives of international agencies in Cairo, has set up two inter-agency committees for close monitoring of the emergency and rehabilitation needs.

* * *

A United Nations official announced today that Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had been in contact with the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi, concerning alleged election irregularities during the recent United Nations supervised elections. The Secretary-General told Mr. Savimbi that a second round would be held if "certain figures" in the number of votes counted were not reached.

The four-member of the Ad Hoc Commission sent to Angola to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement was on its way to New York and was

(more)

expected to brief the Security Council upon return.

* * *

The General Assembly decided this morning to invite the International Organization for Migration to participate in its sessions and work in the capacity of observer.

A 66-Power resolution to that effect was adopted without a vote. It was introduced by the Representative of Sweden, who said the action would contribute to a more efficient division of labour in allocating the necessary resources to deal with migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

* * *

In Geneva on Monday, 19 October, the Committee on Human Rights will begin its examination of reports of measures taken by Burundi, Senegal, Venezuela, Luxembourg, Tanzania, Niger and Iran to promote and protect human rights, as it holds its forty-sixth session.

The 18 human rights experts will examine State reports in the presence of the State representatives, who are expected to reply to questions and to take down and submit to their Governments recommendations on ways to improve the implementation of civil and political rights. The Committee is also expected to consider any further contributions it might wish to make to the preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna next June.

* *** *